

## Message Text

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16

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-08 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 IO-04 /065 W

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R 240530Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9030

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIAN MINISTER OF JUSTICE VISITS FRANCE

1. ON OCTOBER 22 SAUDI ARABIA'S MINISTER OF JUSTICE, SHAIKH MOHAMMAD ALI AL-HARAKAN, DEPARTED JIDDA FOR PARIS TO ATTEND A LEGAL CONFERENCE. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A DELEGATION OF WHAT THE PRESS TERMED "LEADING ISLAMIC JURISTS."

2. SAUDI PRESS OCTOBER 23 REPORTED THAT HARAKAN WOULD MEET THAT SAME DAY WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD-D'ESTAING. THE VISIT IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE RECEIVING A FAIR AMOUNT OF PUBLICITY IN SAUDI ARABIA.

3. COMMENT: HARAKAN IS SAUDI ARABIA'S FIRST MINISTER OF JUSTICE. HE ASSUMED THAT POST IN 1970 AFTER HAVING SERVED MANY YEARS AS THE "QADI" (RELIGIOUS JUDGE) OF JIDDA. BEFORE HARAKAN'S APPOINTMENT ALL JUDICIAN AFFAIRS WERE IN THE HANDS OF AUTONOMOUS RELIGIOUS JURISTS. THOUGH HARAKAN IS TRADITIONALLY ORIENTED AND A DEVOUT MUSLIM, HIS APPOINTMENT WAS CONSIDERED A MODERNIZING AND REFORMIST STEP. HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR TOLERANCE AND PRAGMATISM (IN 1969 HE PERFORMED THE FIRST MARRIAGE WE ARE AWARE OF BETWEEN CHRISTIANS UNDER SHARIA LAW). HE IS ALERT, PERSONABLE AND

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POLITICALLY ASTUTE.

4. HAKKAN HAS TRAVELED PREVIOUSLY TO EUROPE AND HAS MET WITH EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS. HE HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT WITHIN LIMITS HE IS WILLING TO TAKE ON THE ULEMA--SOMETIMES REGARDED AS A MAJOR BARRIER TO "PROGRESS" IN SAUDI ARABIA.

5. AMONG THE MANY PROBLEMS CONFRONTING SAUDI ARABIA AS IT PREPARES FOR RAPID INDUSTRIALIZATION IS THE QUESTION OF HOW TO ACCOMMODATE THE ACCOMPANYING MODERNIZATION AND CHANGE WITHIN THE TRADITIONAL SAUDI SYSTEM--ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION SAUDI LEADERS HAVE INSISTED UPON THE NEED TO MAINTAIN TRADITIONAL SAUDI VALUES. WITHIN THIS CONTEXT WE FIND HAKKAN'S ACTIVITIES OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST. THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING FROM EMBASSY PARIS ANY PRESS CLIPPINGS ON HAKKAN'S MEETINGS, PUBLIC STATEMENTS, ETC. WHILE IN PARIS.

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## Message Attributes

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